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REVIEWS.

La démocratie et le régime parlementaire. Par ADOLPHE PRINS, inspector général des prisons du royaume, professor à l'université de Bruxelles. Bruxelles, C. Muquardt, 1887. — 8vo, 220 pp.

Dissatisfaction with the present results of democratic government has now become very general, almost universal, among publicists of the highest order. Some ridicule it, others predict its speedy downfall, while the more generous and earnest still support its principle, but propose great changes in the details of its application. Among the latter belongs the author, whose recent ingenious essay is the subject of this brief review.

Professor Prins attributes the comparative failure of the democratic parliamentary system to the influence of abstract ideas and the reign of an excessive individualism (chapter i, pages 13, 14). According to his view these are the two elemental forces which have produced universal suffrage and territorial representation, from which principles have resulted the uncertainty of legislation, the corruption of government, and the tyranny of the multitude. It would be difficult to gainsay his arguments upon this point. The doctrines, that all men are politically equal, that a territorial district, determined as to size by population, is the only basis of a true representation, and that the representation of the rights and interests of all depends upon universal suffrage, are certainly abstractions, and rest upon speculation rather than the facts of experience. It is also easily demonstrable that universal suffrage and the distribution of representation according to numbers have resulted in giving the balance of political power into the hands of the less intelligent and less conscientious part of the community, and have brought the crafty and the crooked, rather than the wise and upright, into the leading places. In fact, these things hardly require demonstration. A moderately careful observation will reveal them.

I think our learned author has diagnosed his case well, and has discovered the root of the evil ; but the remedy which he prescribes does not appear to me either capable of effecting the cure or even of successful administration. What he proposes is, briefly expressed, to group the voters, in the distribution of representation, according to their economic interests, as laborers, farmers, artisans, merchants, capitalists, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, *etc.*, instead of according to territorial districts, and

to represent the group instead of the individual in the elections. He contends that in this manner, and in this manner only, we shall get a representation of the legitimate interests of the whole society and a legitimate proportion in the distribution of the representation (chapter x, pages 195 ff.).

In order to escape the criticism which he himself has applied so freely to the present system, *viz.*, that it rests upon abstract ideas, Professor Prins leads up to his doctrine by a most thorough and interesting account of the political system of the cities in the middle ages, in which he manifests a large, not to say exaggerated, appreciation of the guilds as political organizations; and while he disclaims their revival as the purpose or consequence of his propositions, he, nevertheless, does not convince the reader that such would not be the inevitable result. Moreover, I cannot see that his example proves anything. In the middle ages the government was over and above and independent of these economic organizations, and could keep the peace and hold the balance of justice (with much difficulty and never perfectly, indeed) between them in their fierce struggles about things which appeal most strongly to the selfish side of human nature. It is a very different thing to construct a government *out of* such organizations, which will fulfil this same necessary and indispensable end. Each member of the legislature and the administration must regard himself as the representative and conservator of all the interests of the state, before he will be moved by the sense of justice and the general welfare; and in order to produce and sustain this sentiment in him, his constituency must be composed of participants in these various interests. Even then it is difficult enough to prevent the tyranny of the stronger over the weaker interest. If, on the other hand, we make each member the representative of but a single interest, and subject him to its motives, purposes, and instructions, how can we ever get anything in government but a conscienceless tyranny by the combination of the stronger interests against the weaker? I know that the modern political science is attributing a social end to government; but we must not forget that more important if more ancient end, *viz.*, justice to all. Unless we construct our governmental institutions so as to secure this, the pursuit of the social end will result in a despotism far more intense than any emperor or king has yet exercised.

Still further, it appears to me that the grouping of people according to their pursuits in the exercise of their *political* rights would be naturally followed by the impulse to introduce the like distinctions into the *private* law of the state; the result of which, if accomplished, would be a conflict of laws most destructive to legal and political civilization. Any student of legal and political history has examples enough of such a sequence of social movements.

Lastly, the author fails to instruct us how, in states whose governmental institutions already rest upon universal suffrage and territorial representation, his system can ever come to application; and it is for such states that it is intended. His object is, through it, to get the power out of the hands of the lower classes, who by the system of universal suffrage are in the majority. The only *legal* way to secure the realization of his proposition, therefore, is through the voluntary surrender of that power by these classes. It is not to be expected that they will do this consciously. It is hardly to be expected that they can be brought to it through deception. There would remain then only the method of *coup d'état*, — a method indeed of practical politics at times, but not of political science.

JOHN W. BURGESS.

American Statesmen. The Life of Thomas Hart Benton. By THEODORE ROOSEVELT. Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1887. — 372 pp.

The thirteen volumes of this series that have preceded Mr. Roosevelt's have presented in general lines that view of our political history prior to 1850 which it is fashionable rather than popular to hold at the present day. In respect to party principles, the standpoint of the series is mildly federalistic. In judging the great men who are the subjects of its biographies, the various contributors are in substantial accord on general characteristics, though diverging more or less on special points. It is assumed as axiomatic, for example, that Jefferson was a tricky, treacherous politician of the baser sort; Madison, an administrative imbecile; Jackson, a stubborn, hot-headed ignoramus, whose only virtue was embodied in his threat to hang the nullifiers; and Webster, a demigod up to the 7th of March, 1850. Mr. Roosevelt's book exhibits all these earmarks of the series. While nominally a life of Benton, it is practically a history of United States politics from 1820 to 1850, with an explanation of the Missouri statesman's position in reference to each of the great questions that arose during that period. From Benton's devotion to Jackson, he became the doughtiest champion of that old hero against the combined assaults of what is generally considered our greatest political trio, — Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. Mr. Roosevelt makes much of his book a study in comparative reputations, seeking, and often with considerable show of success, to establish for Benton a claim to equal rank with the famous three. The general result of the study seems to be that Benton was in all respects the peer of Clay, and, while perhaps not intellectually equal to Webster or Calhoun, yet more honest and consistent than the former, and infinitely more patriotic than the